

The embodiments of the invention in which an exclusive property or privilege is claimed are defined as follows:

1. An electronic signature system, comprising:

a data network;

5 a document processing system, comprising:

a registering component for identifying a particular document created by an application;

an assigning component that designates at least one area of the document for signature tasks by a user;

10 a verification component that controls access to the document;

a signing component that allows placement of an electronic signature in the at least one designated area of the document;

a storing component for storing the documents and associated signature information; and

15 a retrieval component for allowing review of the document and associated signature information; and

a remotely located computer-based system in communication with the document processing system via the data network having a user interface component that displays a document on the remote system and interfaces with the document processing system.

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2. The system of claim 1, wherein the registering component registers at least one of: submission date, submission time, document version, ownership or access parameters.

3. The system of claim 1, comprising an encryption component for encrypting the document to protect the contents of the document from being altered.

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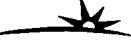
4. The system of claim 1, wherein the assigning component assigns a deadline for completion of the signature tasks by the user.
5. The system of claim 1, wherein the storing component stores the placement location of the electronic signature in the at least one designated area of the document.
- 5      6. The system of claim 1, wherein the storing component stores information about the user.
7. The system of claim 6, wherein the information about the user comprises the user's electronic signature.
- 10     8. The system of claim 1, comprising an audit component for auditing the transactional history of the document.
9. The system of claim 1, wherein the remotely located computer-based system comprises a posting component that manages a secure communication link between the remotely located computer-based system and the document processing computer-based system over the data network.
- 15     10. The system of claim 1, wherein the document processing system comprises a converting component for converting the document from its native format into a format that is no longer editable by the application that created it.
- 20     11. The system of claim 1, wherein the remotely located computer-based system comprises a converting component for converting the document from its native format into a format that is no longer editable by the application that created it.

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12. A method for electronic signature for use with a document processing computer-based system, comprising:
- registering a document with the document processing system;
- designating at least one area of the document for signature;
- 5 assigning at least one user to sign the document in the designated area;
- verifying that the at least one user has access to sign the document;
- associating an electronic signature with the at least one designated area of the
- document;
- storing the document and associated signature information; and
- 10 displaying the document and associated electronic signature information.
13. The method of claim 12, wherein registering a document comprises registering at least one of: submission date, submission time, document version, ownership or access parameters.
14. The method of claim 12, wherein registering a document comprises encrypting the 15 document to protect the contents of the document from being altered.
15. The method of claim 12, comprising assigning a completion deadline to the at least one user assigned to sign the document.
16. The method of claim 12, wherein storing the document and associated signature information comprises storing the placement location of the electronic signature associated 20 with the at least one designated area of the document.
17. The method of claim 12, wherein storing the document and associated signature information comprises storing information associated with the user's electronic signature.

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18. The method of claim 12, comprising auditing the transactional history of the document.

19. The method of claim 12, comprising converting the document from its native format into a format that is no longer editable by the application that created it.

- 5        20. A system for allowing various document signing functions, comprising:
- a registering component for identifying a document;
  - an assigning component that designates at least one area of the document for signature;
  - a verification component that controls access to the document;
  - 10      a signing component that allows review of the document and execution of an electronic signature in the at least one designated area of the document;
  - a storing component for storing the document and associated signature information; and
  - a retrieval component for allowing retrieval of the document and associated 15      signature information.

21. The system of claim 20, wherein the registering component registers at least one of: submission date, submission time, document version, ownership or access parameters.

22. The system of claim 20, comprising an encryption component for encrypting the document to protect the contents of the document from being altered.

- 20        23. The system of claim 20, wherein the assigning component assigns a completion deadline for execution of an electronic signature in the at least one designated area of the document.

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24. The system of claim 20, wherein the storing component stores the placement location of the electronic signature in the at least one designated area of the document.
25. The system of claim 20, wherein the storing component stores information about a user associated with the document and the various document signing functions provided by  
5 the system.
26. The system of claim 25, wherein the information about the user associated with the system comprises the user's electronic signature.
27. The system of claim 20, comprising an audit component for auditing the transactional history of the document.
- 10 28. The system of claim 20, wherein the system comprises a converting component for converting the document from its native format into an alternate format.
29. A system for allowing various document signing functions, the system being in communication with a document processing computer-based system via a data network, comprising:  
15        a user interface component for displaying an electronic document to which a user of the computer-based system desires to assign signing functions or to electronically sign; and  
        a posting component that moves the electronic document to the document processing system over the data network.
- 20 30. The system of claim 29, comprising a converting component for converting the document from its native format into a format that is no longer editable by the application that created it.

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31. The system of claim 29, wherein the posting component encrypts the document to protect the contents of the document from being altered.

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